

Statement of Rep. Lee Terry
Hearing on “H.R. 1518, a bill to amend the Horse Protection Act”
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
November 13, 2013

Welcome to today’s hearing of the CMT subcommittee. I am pleased to welcome our witnesses and to welcome my good friend, Congressman Whitfield, the Chairman of the Energy and Power Subcommittee and sponsor of the legislation that is the subject of today’s legislative hearing.

I have admired horses for much of my adult life, beginning in college and law school when I worked part-time at the local racetrack in Omaha. The idea of these animals being abused and mistreated, whether on the rack track or in the show ring, bothers me a great deal.

Congressman Whitfield’s legislation, the Prevent All Soring Tactics Act, amends various parts of the Horse Protection Act of 1970 and 1976. H.R. 1518 bans the use of all “action devices,” weighted shoes, pads, hoof bands and other devices which alter the horse’s gait. This legislation would also change the current self-governing framework, where Horse Industry Organizations train and appoint inspectors for shows and exhibitions with some oversight by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), an agency of the Department of Agriculture. H.R. 1518 would direct the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate new regulations under which USDA would take over the licensing, training, assigning and overseeing of these inspectors.

I look forward today to an exchange of ideas reflecting multiple viewpoints on this legislation. No law is ever perfect, and often, Congress needs to act in order to modernize, clarify or reduce burdens. I have no doubt that there are issues within the HPA that need to be addressed. However, I believe that when Congress is considering legislation that adds new layers of regulation to an industry, we must be precise. This means narrowly tailoring this legislation to fit the specific problem that needs to be addressed.

Thank you again, and welcome, to our witnesses for traveling here today. I would especially like to welcome an elected official from Tennessee, Commissioner Julius Johnson, Tennessee’s Commissioner of Agriculture.